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First Committee
13th meeting
Wednesday, 16 October 2002, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kiwanuka ..... (Uganda)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Rivas (Colombia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda items 57, 58 and 60 to 73 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects and introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security items

The Acting Chairman: In accordance with its programme of work and timetable, the Committee will continue with the second phase of its work: thematic discussion on item subjects and the introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament-related international security agenda items.

Today, delegations are invited to make statements regarding conventional weapons, as well as to introduce draft resolutions.

Mr. Salander (Sweden): On behalf of all sponsoring delegations and my own delegation, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.46, on the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW). My delegation is grateful to all sponsoring countries for their support for that important draft resolution.

In December 2001, at the Second Review Conference of the States parties to the 1980 Convention, important progress was made in extending the scope of the Convention and its Protocols to include armed conflicts of a non-international character. We should like to take this opportunity to commend the Chairman of the Conference, Ambassador Les Luck of Australia, for his efforts to bring the Review Conference to a successful conclusion.

At the Review Conference, it was also decided that follow-up work should be commissioned, under the oversight of a Chairman-Designate, Ambassador Rakesh Sood of India, in the form of a meeting of States parties to the Convention to be held at Geneva on 12 and 13 December 2002. It was furthermore decided to establish an open-ended Group of Governmental Experts with two separate Coordinators: Ambassador Chris Sanders of the Netherlands, to lead the work on discussing ways and means to address the issue of explosive remnants of war, and Minister Peter Kolarov of Bulgaria, to explore further the issue of mines other than anti-personnel mines. The Review Conference also decided to ask the Chairman-Designate to undertake consultations on how to promote compliance with the Convention, and to invite interested States parties to convene a meeting of experts in order to consider possible issues related to small-calibre weapons and ammunition.

The draft resolution expresses support for the work conducted by the Chairman-Designate, by the two coordinators and by the Group of Governmental

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Experts. It also encourages further work with a view to submitting to the States parties recommendations on explosive remnants of war, as well as reports on mines other than anti-personnel mines and on compliance. Great efforts have already been put into all of this important work, and we hope for continued progress, resulting in a successful meeting of States parties on 12 and 13 December this year.

As there are no signs yet of a change in the worrisome trend of more civilians being afflicted by armed conflicts, the Convention and its Protocols remain a highly important and integral part of international humanitarian law.

The draft resolution before us calls upon all States to become parties to the Convention and its Protocols, and to adhere to its provisions, including the provision to extend the scope to include armed conflicts of a non-international character.

Sweden would like to express its support for further development of this instrument, in order to reach the humanitarian objective of limiting the suffering of civilians and combatants alike.

On behalf of all sponsors, I wish to express our sincere hope that the draft resolution will be adopted this year again without a vote.

Mr. Naidu (Fiji): As Chairman of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Group, I have asked for the floor today to make a statement on behalf of Australia, the Republic of Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, Fiji.

The tragic events of 11 September 2001 cast a pall over the work of the First Committee at the fifty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly. One year later, the terrorist threat remains ever-present, as demonstrated by the recent tragic events in Bali. The Pacific Islands Forum Group extends its deepest condolences to the Government and people of Indonesia and to all countries that lost nationals in the Bali tragedy. In particular, the Group wishes to convey its most profound sympathies to the Government and people of Australia in their hour of grief over the loss of so many lives.

Preventing terrorist groups from gaining access to weapons, including small arms and light weapons, is a fundamental security challenge. More effective control over the spread and availability of small arms will help to bring safety and prosperity to the lives of innocent and vulnerable people and prevent terrorist groups from inflicting indiscriminate carnage.

The illicit trade in small arms has a destabilizing impact on security in the Pacific region. In our region, the possession of even a handful of unsophisticated weapons or ammunition in the wrong hands can result in civilians and communities being threatened and can affect the viability of democratically elected Governments. The importance of a safe and secure environment is crucial to the sustainable development of regional economies on a long-term basis.

The Pacific island countries are committed to putting effective controls in place, including national legislation and effective stockpile management procedures, to prevent illicit small arms flows. In this regard, the Pacific Islands Forum adopted the Nasonini Declaration in August 2002 to address regional security and governance challenges. This Declaration is contained in United Nations document A/57/331. In addition, the Forum is finalizing draft model legislation for a common approach to weapons control in the Pacific islands region. This will serve as the basis for the implementation and enforcement of effective national legislation in our region where it does not already exist.

It is over one year since Member States agreed by consensus to adopt the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The Programme of Action provides a comprehensive and dynamic framework for Member States to follow in combating the illicit small arms trade at the national, regional and international levels. The international community must now focus on ensuring full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action, to which the Pacific Islands Forum countries are strongly committed and towards which they have already taken significant steps. In this respect, the Pacific Islands Forum Group welcomes again the tabling of draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.33, entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects", which gives essential backing to the implementation of the Programme of Action.

We are also pleased that, in 2003, Japan will host a small arms workshop for Pacific island countries.

Japan and Australia are coordinating closely to ensure that this workshop brings practical, tangible security and governance benefits to the Pacific islands region. Japan's workshop will build on the workshop hosted by Australia in 2001, which focused on the development of national legislation and the implementation of effective procedures to safeguard small arms stockpiles in regional countries.

The United Nations will continue to play a key role in overseeing the implementation of the Programme of Action, and in ensuring that its recommendations are carried out in the field. An example of a welcome proactive activity on the part of the United Nations in this area was the recent assessment mission to Papua New Guinea, led by the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which identified some practical steps to advance weapons disposal and to consolidate the peace process in Bougainville. Similarly, the Secretary-General's report on small arms represents a timely contribution to the international efforts to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, usefully identifying ways in which the Security Council can help to control and eradicate illicit arms trade.

As identified in the report, through two areas in particular — inclusion of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) activities in peacekeeping mandates, and rigid reinforcement of the United Nations arms embargoes — the Council can make a practical and positive impact on international efforts to combat the illicit trade in small arms.

In the lead-up to the biennial meeting on small arms in mid-2003, the Pacific Islands Forum countries urge Member States to renew their efforts to implement the United Nations Programme of Action. We must maintain a strong collective resolve to address effectively the governance, humanitarian and security dimensions of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Shaw (Australia): Australia fully endorses and associates itself with the statement on small arms delivered by the representative of Fiji on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Group. We endorse, in particular, the statement's call for continued vigilance by the international community in addressing small arms problems and in implementing the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

We look forward to a productive first biennial meeting on the Programme of Action in July 2003. Australia is again pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolutions on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures.

Australia is fully committed to the target of achieving a landmine-free world. We are strong supporters of the Ottawa Convention, and we will continue to work actively in our region to build support for the Convention, with the aim of its eventual universalization.

Australia has been an active Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee on Stockpile Destruction, managed in Geneva as part of the Convention's intersessional process. We will show similar enthusiasm for our new role as a co-Rapporteur of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance. Australia is again pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution on the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Australia welcomes the positive progress made at the Second Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW), presided over by Australia in December 2001. In particular, the decision to establish an open-ended working group of governmental experts on explosive remnants of war and on mines other than anti-personnel mines will help to ensure that the CCW retains its vitality as a key element of multilateral disarmament machinery and of international humanitarian law. We are again pleased to co-sponsor the First Committee draft resolution on the CCW.

Transparency in armaments is a crucial element of efforts to build understanding and confidence in the field of conventional arms control. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, whose tenth anniversary was acknowledged in this Hall yesterday, is an important instrument in enhancing confidence and security at regional and international levels. Australia is a firm supporter of the Register, and calls on all States to submit annual returns to the United Nations.

We are again pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution on transparency in armaments.

Conventional weapons have been responsible for more injuries, deaths, economic hardship and political instability than any other class of weaponry. We must continue to give prominence to efforts to control and combat the adverse humanitarian, security and economic effects of those weapons.

Mr. Faessler (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to express the horror and sincere condolences of my country to the Governments whose citizens were the victims of the tragedy in Bali.

As I stated in my general statement, Switzerland would like briefly to revert to two topics related to conventional weapons: small arms and lights weapons and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

My country attaches great importance to the problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and welcomes the success of last year's United Nations Conference held in July on that issue and on the implementation of various regional arrangements, particularly within the context of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and in Latin America and Africa. The biennial meeting in 2003 will provide the first opportunity for reviewing progress made in implementing the Programme of Action.

France and Switzerland in particular took the initiative of studying the question of a tracing mechanism aimed at reducing uncontrolled flows of such weapons. We welcome the fact that a United Nations group of experts is studying the feasibility of drafting a legal instrument on the subject. For their part, France and Switzerland have been working to develop a political arrangement, one open to all interested States, to deal with the same matter. Thus, there are two parallel and complementary tracks to be explored simultaneously — the development of a legal instrument, if the United Nations group of experts deems that feasible, and the development of a political instrument, with participation on a voluntary basis.

The Franco-Swiss initiative is based on the Programme of Action, particularly its article 36. At the beginning of this year, we launched intensive consultations within a geographically balanced pilot group. It soon became clear that that process must be opened up in order to respond to the growing demands of transparency and universality. Accordingly, two information and consultation meetings, open to all Missions, took place at Geneva on 26 June and 28 September. I should like to inform members that another open-ended information and consultation meeting is to take place in New York at a date and time to be determined.

I also wish to quickly share my country's views regarding the process launched by the Second Review Conference of the States Parties to the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons, held in December 2001 in Geneva. Members are aware of the importance Switzerland attaches to the role played by that Convention in the context of efforts to update international humanitarian law and adapt it to modern warfare, a role that is illustrated by its progressive extension to include new types of weapons. My country welcomes the outcome of the 2001 Review Conference, particularly the decision to amend the Convention in the context of applying all existing Protocols to non-international armed conflicts. My Swedish colleague already mentioned that issue.

While Switzerland regrets that that extension does not apply to the Protocols adopted after 1 January 2002, we, nonetheless, recognized that the fundamental rules of international humanitarian law must apply to all armed conflicts, as indeed is the case with other important international humanitarian treaties. My Government has set in motion the domestic ratification process, and it invites all States that have not yet done so to do likewise.

The Second Review Conference made another major decision by establishing, as my Swedish colleague also pointed out, a group of governmental experts to discuss means for addressing the problems of explosive remnants of war and landmines other than anti-personnel mines. The problem of explosive remnants of war is nothing new. They continue to take a toll among many people in various parts of the world. Above and beyond their tragic human costs, explosive remnants of war hamper the provision of humanitarian aid, slow down peacekeeping operations and impede the cultivation of agricultural land and reconstruction. That problem will most likely grow worse in the future, as technological development proceeds.

Submunitions are an important category of explosive remnants of war and must be treated as a priority. The number of accidents caused by unexploded submunitions to civilians has reached alarming levels. Almost three years ago, Switzerland submitted a proposal for international regulations on technical specifications aimed at preventing such submunitions from becoming explosive remnants of war. The goal of the initiative is to reduce the danger to which combatants and civilians alike are exposed during conflicts and after them, as well as to reduce the costs associated with removing explosive remnants of war, without, however, limiting the effectiveness of those weapons. Those measures are based on available and affordable technology that has already been introduced in some armed forces.

In the two meetings held by the Group of Governmental Experts in 2002 in Geneva, all participating States recognized that explosive remnants of war constitute an urgent humanitarian problem. My country hopes that, at the conclusion of the upcoming meeting of the Group of Experts in December 2002, it will be possible to adopt a broad mandate allowing for negotiations on general measures. I am thinking, for example, of the obligation to remove explosive remnants of war and of international cooperation and assistance, as well as of more specific, preventive measures, such as technical measures to reduce the number of categories of explosive remnants of war.

With respect to landmines other than anti-personnel mines, Switzerland is convinced that humanitarian imperatives require the regulation of this type of weapons, as well. My country supports the idea of carefully examining the sensitive detonation systems of anti-vehicle mines. My country also welcomes the fact that the Second Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons encouraged States Parties to continue their efforts to consider the problems related to small-calibre weapons and ammunitions and to establish a verification mechanism for the Convention and its Protocols.

Finally, Switzerland attaches great importance to the universalization of Amended Protocol II on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby Traps and Other Devices. In my capacity as Chairman of the Third Annual Conference of the States Parties to the Protocol, I sent a letter, in December 2001, to all States that have not yet acceded to the Protocol, inviting them to do so now. I take this opportunity today to renew that appeal.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): As in previous years, my delegation would like to take the floor to address the First Committee in support of draft resolution A/57/L.46, introduced by Sweden and co-sponsored by the Netherlands, on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. This Convention and its Protocols serve to reduce the unnecessary suffering of combatants, as well as of civilians. They are a major instrument of international humanitarian law that builds on the fundamental norm of law on armed conflict, which says that military necessities in armed conflict have to be balanced continually against the humanitarian objective of preventing unnecessary human suffering.

Over the last year, the Group of Governmental Experts of States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) has considered, inter alia, measures to address the issue of explosive remnants of war. The number of human casualties caused by unexploded munitions after the end of a conflict is staggering. That number is of at least the same magnitude as the number of casualties caused by landmines. Yet, there is no instrument to deal with this grave problem. The humanitarian urgency has been recognized by all States Parties to the CCW.

As Coordinator for the very complex issue of explosive remnants of war, I would like to express my satisfaction with the work that we have done in the course of this year, and I want to thank the delegations of the States Parties to the CCW for their constructive attitude and their substantive contribution to the discussions in the Group of Experts.

I am now preparing for the December session of the Group of Experts, and I have circulated a draft proposal on possible further work. That draft proposal reflects my personal view and is, of course, only a first idea on the way forward. I hope that we can achieve the necessary degree of convergence in December and agree, on the basis of consensus, on how to proceed. I welcome any comments delegations may have, either here in New York or in Geneva.

It is not my intention to focus the December session of the Group of Experts exclusively on my proposal. On the contrary, I very much wish that the major part of the time available be dedicated to the study and discussion of substantive issues. To promote

this, I have invited several States Parties and organizations to make presentations on relevant aspects of explosive remnants of war.

I would like to conclude by stressing the importance of the further universalization of, and adherence to, the Convention and its Protocols. We therefore join Sweden and others in expressing the wish that this draft resolution be adopted without a vote.

Mrs. Raholinirina (Madagascar) (*spoke in French*): Since I am taking the floor for the first time in the Committee, my delegation would like to join previous speakers in warmly congratulating our Chairman on being elected to guide our work. We wish him every success in fulfilling his mandate and assure him of our complete cooperation. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau. My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to offer its sincere condolences to the countries affected by the barbarous attacks in Bali.

The illicit traffic in small arms in all its aspects continues to be a very topical issue because of its humanitarian consequences and its impact on security and development. The recent public meeting of the Security Council on this issue demonstrates the international community's growing concern at this scourge, which is a complex and multifaceted challenge to international peace and security.

Rather than being reduced in number, enormous quantities of small arms are still in circulation and kill at least 500,000 people a year. Apart from conflict situations, exacerbated by the ease with which such arms are acquired and modified, we are also witnessing an increase in crime, which is a threat to public security and to the stability of Governments.

The destabilizing and destructive effects of small arms and their link to drug trafficking and terrorism and the illegal exploitation of natural resources mean that we need greater mobilization by the international community to halt the proliferation of such weapons.

Madagascar believes that the Programme of Action adopted by consensus in July 2001 in New York is an important landmark in international action to combat this phenomenon to the extent that it covers national, regional and global strategies in the context of international cooperation. In this respect Madagascar welcomes the creation in April 2002 of a working group, including the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the Department of Political Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Department of Public Information and the World Health Organization, with a view to improving coordinated action on small arms. We also support the establishment of advisory services on small arms within the Department for Disarmament Affairs with a view to helping Member States to attain the objectives of the Programme of Action.

Success in this joint endeavour will depend on rapid and effective implementation of the programme of action and the genuine determination by the international community to eradicate illicit trafficking in small arms. Madagascar hopes that the biennial meeting planned for 2003 will enable preparations for the review conference in 2006 and that questions of vital importance for peace and security, such as the holding of weapons by individuals and the transfer of weapons to non-State entities, will be considered in greater detail.

As everyone knows, this sort of transaction is of major importance in the continuance and proliferation of conflicts, particularly in Africa. We also hope that the meeting will seriously address the vital financial resources for the implementation of measures set out in the Programme of Action. Moreover, Madagascar believes that the problem of illicit trafficking in small arms should be looked at at its very source, that is at the level of producers and importers. My delegation firmly believes that the scourge of proliferation of small arms can be eliminated only with genuine cooperation by the major actors involved.

Here we are concerned to note that 98 countries have arms industries and only 22 of them publish information on their sales and exports. Efforts to eradicate small arms must be supported by greater transparency in weapons markets. Accordingly, Madagascar supports the establishment of an international instrument on the identification of supply channels and on the traceability of small weapons. Until there is a consensus on this matter, we believe it necessary for exporting countries to take appropriate measures to ensure effective controls over exports and transit of small arms.

Still in the context of measures to be taken, Madagascar endorses the idea of strengthening interaction between the Security Council and the

General Assembly on matters relating to small arms with a view to promoting long-term strategies.

In conclusion, my delegation hopes that the question of small arms will benefit from the same attention as that accorded to other weapons of mass destruction. It is the duty of all of us to prevent this scourge from continuing to take so many human lives and wipe out so many years of development effort.

Ms. Saiga (Japan): I have asked to take the floor in order to present draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.33 on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, on behalf of Colombia, South Africa and another 105 countries, which as of today have joined Japan in sponsoring this draft resolution.

Japan has been tackling issues related to small arms and light weapons since 1995, when we proposed the first small-arms resolution to the General Assembly, which eventually led to the convening of the first United Nations Conference in July 2001. The Programme of Action adopted by consensus at that conference was a historic achievement representing the collective will of the international community to address the serious problems caused by these weapons. Last year's resolution describes a path that must be taken to meet the new challenges, paving the way for a meeting to follow up this Programme of Action. This year, Japan hopes that further steps will be taken with draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.33. I would like, if I may, to explain some of its salient points.

First, with this draft resolution, we hope that venue and timing of the first two biennial meetings that are stipulated in the Programme of Action will be decided. In a series of consultations with many delegations in Geneva and here in New York, we have observed that the majority of the delegations prefer to hold this meeting in New York in July 2003. This majority view is reflected in this draft resolution. We all should work to ensure that the biennial meeting will provide the opportunity for fruitful consideration of the implementation of the Programme of Action at the national, regional and global levels.

Secondly, in accordance with last year's resolution, the Group of Governmental Experts was established to assist the Secretary-General in undertaking a study to examine the feasibility of developing an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons. The Group convened its first meeting in July. In this draft resolution we welcome the Group's establishment and express hope that it will produce meaningful results.

Thirdly, in order to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons, we would like to invite States to express their views on further steps that could be taken. Due to the difficult nature of this problem and the divergence of views on it, we consider that this is the most reasonable and practical approach.

Looking ahead to the first biennial meeting we would like to note with appreciation the active contribution that States, international regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society have made in the implementation of the Programme of Action. We encourage them to take further initiatives to promote implementation at all levels.

In conclusion, I sincerely hope that this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Reyes (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first to express my most profound sentiments of condolence and solidarity with the Government of Indonesia on behalf of the Government of Colombia and on my own behalf. We feel their grief as if it were our own. Speaking on behalf of Japan, South Africa and Colombia, the representative of Japan just presented draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.33 entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects". It is my honour to introduce that draft now. The Government of Colombia should like once again to voice its satisfaction at the number of sponsors that have, this year again, endorsed the draft resolution just presented by the representative of Japan.

The support of these countries for the draft resolution reaffirms and demonstrates the determination of the international community — already reflected in the adoption of the Programme of the Action of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects — to give this problem the priority it deserves on the international agenda and to shoulder the responsibilities involved in beginning to resolve it.

In the past year, political support has been consolidated for dealing with the question of small arms and light weapons, and numerous activities have

been undertaken at the local, national and regional levels. It has been highly encouraging to note, and to participate in, meetings aimed at the practical implementation of the Programme of Action. Meetings were held in Brussels; Geneva; Santiago de Chile; San Jose, Costa Rica; Vevey, Switzerland; Tokyo; Zagreb; Pretoria; and Windhoek, to name just a few.

We have also seen initiatives on specific aspects of the Programme of Action, such as marking or the exchange of information and experiences. At times these initiatives have been undertaken by States, at other times by non-governmental organizations, and often both have worked together with the United Nations and or its agencies.

Given that the problem of small arms and light weapons adversely affects various regions of the world in different ways, the myriad activities being undertaken at the national and regional levels reflect the diversity of the efforts being made to address various facets of the problem. The work to which the Conference has given rise is tremendously useful in terms of enhancing the security of citizens, democratic security and international security.

Beyond that, it is imperative that we acknowledge and promote the invaluable work being done by non-governmental organizations in implementing the Programme of Action.

With respect to the question of small arms in the context of the United Nations, it would be difficult to come up with a better illustration of partnership among States, civil society, non-governmental organizations and international agencies. I should like to avail myself of this opportunity to stress how important it is that the various States take the necessary measures to implement the Programme of Action. I am aware that this has been said a number of times over, but the designation of a focal point and the elaboration of a national plan are key measures for implementing the Programme.

I should like to express my thanks for, and to highlight, the work being done by the Department for Disarmament Affairs and the ambitious and comprehensive vision that is guiding the work of our delegations. Finally, I should like once again to stress the importance of keeping intact the political momentum that was created a year ago in order effectively to address the problem of small arms and light weapons, and, in this context, the need to contribute constructively and imaginatively to preparations for, and to the successful holding of, the conference to be held next year.

Ms. Notutela (South Africa): At the outset, may I, on behalf of the South African delegation, thank the delegation of Japan, and especially Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi, for all of their dedicated work in preparing this year's draft resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

Japan is assuming an important leadership role in this issue at a time when key developments in the context of the Programme of Action will soon take place — in 2003. Japan can count on the full support of South Africa in this regard.

The Programme of Action adopted at the 2001 Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspect is the only multilaterally negotiated and politically binding Programme of Action that provides a framework to guide our collective efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate this illicit trade.

The commitment shown by States and by regional and non-governmental organizations in implementing the politically binding undertakings made in terms of the Programme of Action is a positive step in the right direction to eradicate this illicit trade.

South Africa also wishes to express its appreciation for the efforts of the Department for Disarmament Affairs to support the implementation of the Programme of Action.

South Africa believes that the main objective of this draft resolution is to identify those issues in the Programme of Action on which we need to take specific action at this session of the General Assembly. In addition, a generic reference is necessary to emphasize the need for the early and full implementation of the Programme of Action as well as to encourage the mobilization of resources and expertise to promote its implementation.

In preparing this draft resolution, Japan has, in our view, correctly identified those additional issues on which we need to focus our attention in the coming year, namely the first of the two biennial meetings, brokering, information-sharing and the Group of Governmental Experts on Tracing.

The first biennial meeting of States has as its objective to consider the national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action. South Africa believes that the main aim of this meeting is therefore to share information on the progress made, or not made, in the implementation of the Programme of Action. It would also be useful for regional, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to utilize this opportunity to share information on their efforts to combat this illicit trade.

South Africa further wishes to express its appreciation to Ambassador Rakesh Sood of India for the very competent manner in which he is chairing the Group of Governmental Experts on Tracing Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. The tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons is a vital link in our collective effort to eradicate this illicit trade, and Ambassador Sood can count on South Africa's support in his efforts to produce a useful study.

In conclusion, we have only begun to address this problem, and it is therefore important to share information on what is being done to prevent and combat this illicit trade. South Africa would like to urge those that have not yet done so to submit their national reports on small arms. These reports are an important tool to enable the international community to verify the extent of the problem and to determine where there is a need to provide relevant assistance and undertake cooperative initiatives.

Mr. Arih (Slovenia): Mr. Chairman, since this is Slovenia's first national statement at this year's session of the First Committee, allow me to extend to you and to other members of the Bureau our sincere congratulations on your election. Let me assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation in the fulfilment of the responsibilities entrusted to you.

I should like also to extend, on behalf of my Government, sincere condolences to the people of Indonesia and to all of those countries whose citizens were victims of the terrible terrorist attack on Bali.

Slovenia fully supports the efforts of the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the Stability Pact and other regional and subregional organizations to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Slovenia is also an active member of the Human Security Network, which attaches particular importance to the question of the threat to human security posed by the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons.

We would like to express our strong support for the proposal made by the Secretary-General in his report on small arms for the development of international mechanisms for identifying and tracing small arms and monitoring embargoes and sanctions. The establishment of such mechanisms is one of the preconditions for more effective action in the field of combating the illicit trade in these weapons.

Since 1990, 4 million men, women and children — thousands of them in our region — have been caught in the crossfire of small arms and light weapons and perished in killing fields all over the globe. A great number of such weapons are still illegally in the possession of individuals in many countries of the region of South-East Europe. Slovenia is deeply concerned about that fact and is very interested in taking prompt action at all levels — global, regional, subregional and national — to combat the destructive consequences of the use of those weapons.

As a follow-up to the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and in implementation of its Programme of Action, I would like to inform the Committee that Slovenia will, together with the Department for Disarmament Affairs, organize a regional conference, to take place in our country in the first half of next year.

Slovenia is committed to strengthening peace and security in South-East Europe, and we hope that that conference will enhance the process of achieving closer regional and subregional cooperation in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and marking and tracing such weapons and controlling their import and export, as well as in the areas of weapons collection and destruction, sharing information and ensuring cooperation with civil society. We are firmly convinced that we can solve the global problem with effective cooperation at the regional and subregional levels.

In conclusion, I should like to express Slovenia's gratitude to the delegations of Japan, Colombia and South Africa for preparing a very comprehensive draft

resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, and to the delegation of Mali for preparing the draft resolution on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them. Slovenia will be glad to co-sponsor both of those draft resolutions.

Mr. Umer (Pakistan): I have asked for the floor to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/57/L.41, entitled "Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels". I do so on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Belarus, Germany, Italy, Nepal, Peru, Ukraine and my own country.

The draft resolution aims to promote disarmament endeavours in an area that has not so far received due attention in the multilateral disarmament forums, namely, the pursuit of conventional disarmament at the regional and subregional levels.

In its preambular part, draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.41 outlines several vital principles and precepts relating to the issue — that is, that arms control plays a pivotal role in promoting peace and security; that in the post-cold-war era threats to peace arise primarily among States located in the same region or subregion; that the preservation of a balance in the defence capabilities of States at the lowest level of armaments would contribute to peace and stability; that agreements to strengthen peace and security at the lowest possible level of armaments and military forces is a desirable objective; that militarily significant States and States with larger military capabilities have a special responsibility in promoting such agreements for regional peace and security; and that an important objective should be to prevent the possibility of military attacks launched by surprise and to avoid aggression.

The preambular part of draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.41 also notes with particular interest the initiatives taken in various regions, including those by a number of Latin American countries, and the proposals for conventional arms control in South Asia, and recognizes the relevance and value of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which has rightly been proclaimed as the cornerstone of European security.

In its operative part, the draft resolution, while deciding to give urgent consideration to the issue of conventional disarmament at the regional and subregional levels, requests the Conference on Disarmament to consider formulating principles that can serve as the framework for regional agreements. It also requests the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States and submit a report to the next session of the General Assembly.

The draft resolution encapsulates unexceptionable and universally recognized principles, adherence to which could prove instrumental in advancing the cause of peace, particularly in the troubled regions of the world.

The sponsors therefore express the hope that the draft resolution will be adopted without any objection.

Mr. Mourao (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): Small arms and light weapons are not by nature weapons of mass destruction, but the degree to which such weapons proliferate places them in that category. Suffice it to say that an enormous number — almost 0.5 million people — are victims of such weapons every year.

In the countries members of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, as well as in the associated States, Bolivia and Chile — on behalf of which I have the honour to take the floor — the illicit traffic in small arms is a threat to public security. Combating the illicit trade in such weapons is one of the priorities of our countries, as we demonstrated through our active participation in the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held here last year, and in drawing up the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials.

In this connection, MERCOSUR looks forward, at the global level, to seeing the Programme of Action, adopted at last year's Conference, receive the broadest possible support. Although the Programme of Action may be less ambitious than we had hoped, we consider that its provisions constitute an important framework for activities to deal with the problem of the illicit traffic in small arms and to move forward in various domains. Experience- and information-sharing at the international level will make that possible, and we hope that we will be able to agree on general criteria, so as to make progress with regard to such activities.

The 2001 Conference initiated collective action in which MERCOSUR is taking an active part. Likewise,

we trust that the international community will take advantage of the meetings planned for 2003 and 2005 to ensure coordination and the exchange of information, so that the 2006 Review Conference will produce encouraging results and further expand the scope of action.

At the regional level, the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials provides a legal framework for the countries of the Americas, including those in MERCOSUR, to implement a number of provisions in the Programme of Action of the United Nations Conference. In this regard, we are making efforts to ensure their effective application and, as a signal of our commitment to that cause, all States members of MERCOSUR are carrying out programmes for the destruction of small arms.

Also at the subregional level, our countries are making progress towards the creation of a shared register of vendors and purchasers of firearms, parts and munitions and towards a MERCOSUR system of security information exchange aimed, inter alia, at standardizing criteria. We believe that the subregional level is the natural and primary context for action. Given the high degree of convergence in national legislation, we have been able to establish a working group on firearms and munitions, the second meeting of which was held in March in Buenos Aires.

These subregional initiatives have allowed MERCOSUR to strengthen its action on the register of physical individuals and legal entities involved in such trafficking; authorized points of embarkation and arrival; an instantaneous online monitoring network; and the harmonization of national legislation in this field. We also wish to point out that the network of non-governmental organizations established last year has proved to be an efficient and effective tool in educating the population on the great scope of the problem of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

Despite MERCOSUR's success in some areas, we believe that much remains to be done, and not only in the subregional context. To that end, we believe that particular priority should be attached to all measures to trace weapons, the identification of routes of illicit trafficking and brokering and the search for supply routes, which can be coordinated at the international level. We support the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Tracing Small Arms and Light Weapons and look forward to the adoption of an international instrument permitting international cooperation in the disruption of illicit trafficking routes. We believe it necessary to initiate a study on illicit brokering and on how to advance in controlling such activities.

These efforts should be carried out in the context of the United Nations, the only forum capable of ensuring the legitimacy, universality and efficacy of measures to combat such trafficking. Similarly, we are certain that, in an area of such importance to the security of so many States, such measures should be of a juridical nature. We should not forget that national and subregional efforts must be strengthened by collective global action involving State and non-State actors, international and non-governmental organizations and civil society. Only thus can we be sure of moving in the right direction.

Mr. Lint (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): It is a pleasure to see you presiding over this meeting, Sir. I assure you of the full cooperation of Belgium.

I take the floor to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.36, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction", in my capacity as Chairman of the Fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, and on behalf of Nicaragua, Chairman of the Third Meeting, and of Thailand, the future Chairman of the Fifth Meeting.

Since last year's session of the First Committee, anti-personnel mines have claimed an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 new victims. There is thus an urgent need to address this humanitarian problem effectively. That is why, in the preamble of the draft resolution, we reaffirm our determination to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines. We believe it necessary to do the utmost in removing those cowardly and lethal weapons, assuring their destruction and ensuring assistance for the care and rehabilitation, including the social and economic reintegration, of mine victims.

We welcome the entry into force, on 1 March 1999, of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel

Mines and on Their Destruction, and note with satisfaction the work undertaken to implement it.

Having recalled the Meetings of the States Parties at Maputo, Geneva and Managua, we have added a paragraph recalling the Fourth Meeting held at Geneva from 16 to 20 September 2002, and the Declaration of the Fourth Meeting reaffirming the commitment of the States Parties to further intensify their efforts in those areas most directly related to the core humanitarian objectives of the Convention.

We note with satisfaction that additional States have ratified or acceded to the Convention. Indeed, since the Managua Meeting last year, nine States have joined the Convention. In chronological order, they are Nigeria, Algeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Suriname, Afghanistan, Cameroon, the Union of the Comoros and Gambia. I wish to congratulate them here. The total number of States that have formally accepted the obligations of the Convention is now 129. They will soon number 130, following the imminent deposit by the Central African Republic of its instrument of accession. Moreover, 16 States have signed but not yet ratified the Convention.

We emphasize the desirability of attracting the adherence of all States to the Convention and are determined to work strenuously towards the promotion of its universalization. In that respect, the regional approach has proven to be useful in some parts of the world, such as Africa and Latin America, and could prove useful elsewhere.

Finally, we note with regret that anti-personnel mines continue to be used in conflicts around the world, causing human suffering and impeding post-conflict development.

Operative paragraph 1 invites States that have not signed the Convention to accede to it without delay. Universality is one of the major objectives of the Convention. In this context, I urge the 49 States that have not signed the Convention to accede to it as soon as possible. I wish here to highlight the co-sponsorship of countries that have not yet acceded, such as Papua New Guinea, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Tonga and Tuvalu, as well as the declaration of Nepal and that of Turkey, reaffirming its intention to deposit its instrument of accession on the same date as Greece, which ratified nationally last March. I also wish to thank Switzerland and Timor-Leste for their first co-sponsorships and take this opportunity to welcome them to the United Nations.

Paragraph 2 urges the States that have signed but not ratified the Convention to ratify it without delay. The fact that the majority of signatories are sponsoring our draft resolution is an encouraging signal. However, it is also important that the Convention be fully and effectively implemented and complied with, as stressed in paragraph 3. In this regard, the Fourth Meeting of States Parties recalled that the four-year schedule for the destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines will lapse in less than five months for States that become parties in March 1999.

In paragraph 4, we recall the obligation prescribed in article 7 of the Convention to provide the Secretary-General with reports on transparency. Currently, more than 80 per cent of States parties have complied with this requirement and it is essential that those which have not yet done so submit such reports as soon as possible.

Paragraph 5 invites States that have signed but not ratified the Convention or acceded to it to provide, on a voluntary basis, information to make global mine action efforts more effective.

Paragraph 6 renews the call upon all States and other relevant parties to work together to promote the care, rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of mine victims, mine-risk education programmes and the removal of anti-personnel mines placed throughout the world and the assurance of their destruction.

Paragraph 7 invites and encourages all interested States, the United Nations, other relevant international organizations or institutions, regional organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and relevant non-governmental organizations to participate in the programme of intersessional work. That programme makes it possible to carry out exchanges in an informal setting between States parties and States not yet part of the Convention, as well as between States and civil society.

Paragraph 8, which has been amended from the previous year, requests the Secretary-General to undertake the preparations necessary to convene the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention at Bangkok from 15 to 19 September 2003. In that regard,

I would like to thank the Thai authorities for offering to hold the Conference in their country.

Our draft resolution is currently supported by 120 sponsors, representing all regional groups. This is a remarkable achievement that reflects the spirit of the Convention with regard to openness and cooperation between mine-affected countries and States prepared to help them, as well as between Governments and non-governmental organizations.

It is in that spirit that we would like to secure the co-sponsorship of all States parties and signatories to the Convention, as well as the support of the largest number of States possible that have not acceded to the Convention but that will soon do so.

Mr. Mourao (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): Although the fact that 129 States have either ratified or acceded to the Ottawa Convention is a very clear signal of the determination of the international community to end the scourge of anti-personnel mines, this is still not enough — just as all that can be said about the enormous damage these weapons cause is also not enough.

In 1996, the member countries of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, and the associated States of Bolivia and Chile, on whose behalf I have the honour to speak — joined their determination with that of the vast majority of people across Latin America to fight against this type of weapon. That determination coalesced at the Organization of American States, which, in resolutions of its General Assembly, has repeatedly declared the Western Hemisphere a zone free from anti-personnel landmines. In 1997, MERCOSUR once again expressed its position clearly by signing the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. In 1998, the heads of State of MERCOSUR and its associated States turned their desire into commitment at Ushuaia, Argentina, by declaring this region a zone of peace free of weapons of mass destruction and by deciding to take every step necessary to ensure the total elimination of anti-personnel mines, among other things. In 2001, MERCOSUR's six member countries completed their ratifications of the Convention, thereby making themselves parties to the Ottawa Convention. Since then, national legislatures began the process of harmonizing their laws in order to enact the provisions of the Convention and to deal with the destruction of landmine arsenals within their respective jurisdictions. We believe that this chronological summary of events is a reflection of the fact that our subregion has the authority to call on all countries that have not yet done so to accede to this initiative, especially countries in which the majority of such weapons are manufactured.

The destruction of landmines in the subregion goes hand-in-hand with the cooperation that is part of the mine-removal efforts on the part of several countries in our subregion in the context of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Mine-removal work continues to be among the most important tasks in the post-conflict rebuilding process of societies. We must not forget that these weapons, whose potential to inflict damage goes beyond the formal end of any conflict, continue to have long-term devastating effects, particularly among such vulnerable groups as women and children. The violation of international humanitarian law that landmines represent speaks for itself, given that every year 15,000 new victims are added to the hundreds of thousands of persons who are living with the consequences of having been exposed to these weapons.

We therefore call for increased cooperation in the areas of mine removal and assistance. MERCOSUR believes that, although it was intended to provide transparency in the implementation of the Convention's provisions, article 7 can in fact be used as a basis for measuring progress and providing information about the needs of affected States, which today number 50. This approach would also make it possible for us to focus cooperation efforts more effectively, particularly that of donor countries. We trust that the number of States supporting such activities will grow in order to improve security conditions for development in an environment free from the dangers posed by anti-personnel mines. The humanitarian ramifications of this problem continue to be a priority for MERCOSUR. We will therefore continue to cooperate with others as much as we can on the basis of the experience we have acquired.

The Fourth Meeting of States Parties, which was held just a few weeks ago at Geneva, made it possible for us to see the progress that has been made. The Meeting also revealed the increased participation by affected populations in programmes and activities, as well as the fact that mine stockpiles have been destroyed and increased resources have been dedicated

to widening the scope of the task ahead. All of that is particularly encouraging. However, the entire international community must, without exception, participate in the Convention if this progress is to have real meaning and the subregional, regional and global efforts being made are to meet the overall goal of the total elimination of these weapons in order to guarantee the right of peoples to a secure life.

Mr. Langeland (Norway): Norway has the privilege of co-sponsoring several of the draft resolutions introduced today, including draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.33 on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.36 on the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.46 on the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons. Likewise, we are also a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.25 on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them. These draft resolutions are an important part of our disarmament agenda as regards conventional weapons.

At the same time, all these draft resolutions also have a clear humanitarian perspective. Norway regards the spread of illicit small arms and light weapons as a global threat to human security, human rights and international humanitarian law. Illicit small arms undermine peace-building and conflict-prevention. The United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons provides us with a good starting point for intensifying our efforts to deal with a the problem of illicit small arms and light weapons.

We now need to ensure full implementation of the Programme of Action at the national, regional and international levels. In that respect, we need a broad mobilization of Governments, civil society, non-governmental organizations, the United Nations family and regional organizations in follow-up activities. Norway stands ready to contribute both politically and financially.

We are pleased to see a number of ongoing activities at the national and regional levels. Important work has been carried out in the field of tracing and marking. We agree that more needs to be done in the area of illicit brokering. We are convinced that the biennial meetings in 2003 and in 2005 will provide with an opportunity to share information and thus take stock of where we stand in relation to t implementation of the Programme of Action. We al regard those two meetings as important events for t preparation of the 2006 Conference. We hope that t two resolutions on small arms and light weapons w be adopted by consensus.

The Ottawa Mine Ban Convention is an examp of a multilateral process that is working well. Since t Convention was signed nearly five years ago, we ha witnessed important progress in that field. The use anti-personnel mines is decreasing, more mine-affect fields are being cleared and, most important, there h been a significant decline in the number of mi victims. The Convention has established a norm that working beyond its membership.

Despite those achievements, we cannot complacent. Anti-personnel mines are still being use Too many people are still being injured by mine Norway, therefore, fully concurs with the decision the most recent meeting of the States parties to t Mine Ban Convention to further intensify efforts in t areas most directly related to the core humanitari objectives of the Convention. To that end, we ne continued political and financial commitment, as w as further consolidation of the partnership amo Governments and between Governments and civ society. We call upon all Member countries to suppo draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.36, introduced by Belgiu Nicaragua and Thailand.

Norway fully supports draft resoluti A/C.1/57/L.46, introduced by Sweden. We welcon the outcome of the Second Review Conference States Parties to the Convention on Certa Conventional Weapons. We were greatly encourag that the Review Conference decided to extend t scope of the Convention and, by consensus, to set an expert group to consider a mandate for negotiati of a protocol to the CCW on explosive remnants war. We hope that it will be possible to rea agreement by the end of the year on a mandate f negotiating such a legally binding instrument. I shou like to add that Norway supports efforts to bet address the humanitarian challenges posed by an vehicle mines. We hope that the draft resolution on t CCW can be adopted without a vote.

Finally, I should like to underline the importance of transparency in armaments and conventional weapons, as well as of practical disarmament measures for the consolidation of peace. Norway thus supports and is sponsoring draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.37, to be introduced by the Netherlands, and draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.45, to be introduced by Germany.

Mr. Kahende (Kenya): I take the floor in support of draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.36, on implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Anti-personnel mines remain a scourge in many parts of the world. Thousands of civilians are either maimed or killed by them each year. Entire communities are deprived of the means to a decent livelihood because productive land has been mined. As the world strives to eradicate poverty, to achieve sustainable development and to assist countries emerging from conflict, it should be recognized that there are countries in great need of assistance in mine clearance, especially in Africa.

Kenya remains fully committed to fulfilling its obligations as a State party to the Mine Ban Convention. In the past year, Kenya has actively participated in various activities related to the Convention, especially in the intersessional meetings, where it served as Co-Rapporteur of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Awareness and Mine Action Technologies. In the coming year and in the run-up to the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties, Kenya will be Co-Chair of that Committee, which has been renamed the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine-Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies.

In fulfilling its obligations under the Convention, Kenya submitted its initial report in accordance with Article 7 in December 2001 and its first annual report in April 2002. At the regional level, my country is involved in demining operations in the Horn of Africa, under the auspices of the United Nations peacekeeping mission along the Ethiopia-Eritrea border. We believe that the Convention is a comprehensive instrument. If adhered to and fully implemented, it could significantly alleviate much suffering. My delegation would, therefore, like to underscore the need for all delegations to sponsor the draft resolution before us.

Kenya is pleased to be one of the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.36, on implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. As the draft resolution points out, mines are still used in conflicts, thus causing untold suffering and, above all, hindering post-conflict development. In that regard, my delegation would like to express its gratitude to Ambassador Jean Lint, not only for presenting the draft resolution, but also for his very laudable efforts to secure such a high number of sponsors.

Ms. Yamali (Thailand): At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of Thailand, I should like to express our deep condolences to the Government and the peoples of Indonesia, especially to the civilians who are suffering as a result of the tragic incident in Bali.

Thailand would like to associate itself with the statement made previously by the delegation of Belgium addressing landmine problems and introducing the draft resolution on implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, contained in document A/C.1/57/L.36. My delegation would also like to express its gratitude and appreciation to the delegation of Belgium for drafting the text of the draft resolution.

Thailand attaches great importance to landmine-related problems. We are aware of the devastation caused by anti-personnel mines and of the needs of landmine victims, of whom there are many in my own country, in the South-East Asian region and throughout the world. Thailand is of the view that the Ottawa Convention is a significant tool for the world community in eradicating landmines and in preventing further landmine casualties.

We also welcome the success of the Fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention. Through their efforts and dedication — together with the able leadership of Ambassador Jean Lint of Belgium — the participating countries achieved fruitful outcomes and renewed their commitment under the Convention to meeting its humanitarian objective of ridding the world of landmines.

For its part, Thailand has shown its full commitment to the implementation of the Convention, as well as to its universalization.

During the past year, Thailand organized several regional seminars with the objective of building momentum in our region. Next year, as endorsed by the Fourth Meeting of States Parties, Thailand will host a Fifth Meeting of States Parties at Bangkok in September. We hope to take this opportunity to increase awareness of landmine problems in the Asia-Pacific region, where there are many landmines still in place.

In this connection, Thailand has co-sponsored this draft resolution since it was first introduced, and we will continue to do so. My delegation would also like to encourage all countries to join our effort in making our world free of landmines. I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Yugoslavia, which are not States Parties to the Convention, for their sponsorship of this draft resolution.

On behalf of all sponsors, I wish to express our sincere hope that draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.36 on the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction will receive wide support this year.

Mr. Zewdie (Ethiopia): Since this is the first time I am taking the floor, I wish to express my congratulations to all members of the Bureau on their election at the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I would also like to assure the Chairman of the best possible cooperation of my delegation in his discharge of his responsibilities.

First and foremost, we would like to express our appreciation to the Secretariat for its unreserved efforts to implement resolution 56/24 B. My delegation welcomes the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts to examine the feasibility of developing an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons. It is also encouraging to see in the report of the Secretary-General on illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, as contained in document A/57/160, that a number of Member States have cooperated in replying to the request made by the Secretariat on this subject. My country has also reacted positively and promptly to that request. As reflected in Annex II of the report, Ethiopia has taken steps to implement the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. As a first step, my country has designated the Federal Police Commission as the National Coordinating Authority and focal point for the implementation of the Programme of Action. We believe that this step will enable the nation to assemble data and other relevant information on the subject and compile a national report, thereby contributing further to the implementation of the Programme of Action.

However, implementation of the Programme of Action requires a wide range of expertise and financing resources and countries like mine will be facing difficulties in fully discharging their responsibilities. I, therefore, seize this opportunity to urge the Secretariat to mobilize resources and provide assistance, especially in the area of capacity-building.

In conclusion, my delegation once again reiterates the importance we attach to the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

The Acting Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Ethiopia for the kind words addressed to the Chair and to the Bureau.

Ms. Verrier-Fréchette (Canada): Much good work has been done in the area of conventional weapons, and it is important to maintain this positive momentum.

Canada is proud to co-sponsor the draft resolution on the Ottawa Convention, a relatively recent international instrument that has made a real contribution to lessening the tragedies caused by anti-personnel mines. We welcome the ever-growing number of State Parties and want to achieve the instrument's universality. We are aware, though, that much remains to be done.

We call upon all States to join in this effort to achieve this important human security objective.

On small arms and light weapons, we have co-sponsored the draft resolutions presented by Japan and Mali, as well as the German draft resolution on practical disarmament measures. Keeping in mind the 2003 biennial meeting, we believe that States, the United Nations, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) all have an

important role to play in curbing small arms proliferation and in implementing the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

For Canada, a people-centred approach is key to addressing many of the problems caused by small arms and light weapons. Yesterday we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Conventional Arms Register (UNCAR). It is worth reiterating that UNCAR has been key to achieving enhanced transparency in armaments.

Finally, we would like to recognize the importance of the draft resolution on the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW), which now reflects two recent developments, the Second Review Conference on the CCW of December 2001, which launched an extensive inter-sessional process, and the extension of the scope of the Convention and its current Protocols to include armed conflicts of a non-international character, which Canada has accepted and which we encourage others to do at an early date.

We are looking forward to the meetings in December when we hope we will agree on ways to address the issue of explosive remnants of war and mines other than anti-personnel mines in order to advance the humanitarian objectives of the Convention.

Mr. Ngwenya (Mozambique): I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating the Chairman for the excellent manner in which he has been conducting the affairs of this First Committee. My delegation strongly recommends the inclusion on the agenda of the First Committee of agenda item 66 (p), entitled "General and complete disarmament: implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction". My Government attaches great importance to this item.

We thank the representative of Belgium for introducing the draft resolution on the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Landmines represent a serious obstacle to stability and security, as well as to economic and social development. Landmines are responsible for large numbers of casualties and the suffering of innocent civilians, mainly women, children and elderly, particularly in countries affected by internal conflict.

Bearing in mind the extremely destructive power of these deadly devices, the international community made a bold statement through the Ottawa Convention on the need to outlaw the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and on their destruction. The Ottawa Convention has been in force for quite some time and, as we have all seen, its vitality, relevance and strength have survived the test of time. It has played a major role in global affairs in ridding the world of the scourge of landmines, while also being at the forefront of demining in affected countries. However, two challenges remain: the eradication of anti-personnel mines and the universalization of the Convention. Those challenges must be met without delay.

During the Fourth Meeting of the States Parties, held at Geneva from 16 to 20 September 2002, the Government, civil society and the private sector reaffirmed their commitment to the total eradication of anti-personnel landmines. That commitment must be translated into action. As we prepare for the First Review Conference of the Convention, due to take place in 2004, we hope that it will result in the adoption of meaningful recommendations for the elimination of anti-personnel landmines and the universalization of the Convention. The trends so far have been encouraging, as the number of States parties has been increasing consistently. More than 120 States have signed the Convention, while not all of them have ratified it.

In Mozambique, anti-personnel landmines remain a high priority on the Government's agenda. As members will recall, during the protracted conflicts in my country, about 2 million landmines were planted, mostly without a clear mapping system. For that reason, my Government immediately signed and ratified the Ottawa Convention. We did so in recognition of the need to seek a durable solution to that issue. Within the context of the Ottawa Convention, Mozambique destroyed 70,000 landmines in 2001. We also cleared 8.8 million square metres between August 2001 and August 2002. I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm once again Mozambique's commitment to conclude by 2003 the destruction of all mine stockpiles.

Mozambique is committed to playing an important role in combating landmines. Given its long experience in the field of mines, my country offers mine experts for work in various parts of the world. We are also training officials from Angola and Guinea-Bissau because we believe that the implementation of the Ottawa Convention requires strong international cooperation, in which all States, developed and developing, have meaningful roles to play. That partnership must be solidified. That can be done through this Committee's strong commitment to the draft resolution introduced by Belgium on behalf of the States parties.

Mr. Lezona (Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): There is currently a programme for the rehabilitation of ex-combatants and the collection of small arms, which began in 2000. It is now reaching its conclusion in the Republic of Congo. Its results are quite encouraging. More than 8,000 ex-combatants have benefited from rehabilitation assistance. The original target was 10,000 ex-combatants. One hundred and fourteen thousand arms and munitions have been collected and approximately FCFA 1.8 billion have been committed to 2,575 micro projects.

Those laudable efforts of the Congolese Government, undertaken with the help of other States and certain United Nations bodies, including the United Nations Development Programme, are, however, insufficient. Indeed, close to 25,000 declared ex-combatants not yet rehabilitated are awaiting assistance.

The rehabilitation of those young people requires the continued support of the international community. That is why in my country, which has co-sponsored draft resolutions A/C.1/57/L.25 and A/C.1/57/L.33, on assistance to States for curbing the illicit circulation of small arms and collecting them and on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, calls on participants of the First Committee to adopt those draft resolutions unanimously, as it did last year. It also urgently appeals to Member States of the Organization, particularly the group of States concerned with specific disarmament measures, to provide assistance to countries in post-conflict situations.

Finally, the Congolese Government has noted with satisfaction the study submitted by the United Nations on disarmament and non-proliferation, and it hopes to take the necessary measures to implement that education programme.

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): Please allow me to extend our condolences to the people and Government of Indonesia, Australia and others on the tragic incident in Bali. My delegation shares their grief and hopes that the investigation will lead to an early identification of the cause of that disaster.

While my delegation maintains that the development, production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction pose the greatest threat to the survival of mankind, we are also seriously concerned about the illegal trade, transfer, circulation and use of small arms and light weapons. Those weapons have caused death, grievous harm and trauma to thousands of our people, including innocent children. They have also contributed to political and economic instability not only in Sierra Leone, but also in the West African subregion. Indeed, small arms and light weapons continue to pose a serious threat to peace in our part of the world.

Last year we participated actively in the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. I was pleased that the Conference succeeded in adopting a Programme of Action that, we believe, should go a long way towards alleviating the seemingly unending suffering of our people. Expeditious implementation of the Programme of Action is absolutely necessary. It is only a matter of course that we should co-sponsor all draft resolutions related to small arms and light weapons, including A/C.1/57/L.25, on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them. Sierra Leone recently completed successfully a community arms collection exercise in addition to the demobilization, disarmament and rehabilitation programme of the Lomé Peace Agreement, and we are looking forward to the possibility of launching further arms collection measures in the context of the 2001 United Nations Conference Programme of Action and projects for the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures.

At the regional level, Sierra Leone was among the first countries to endorse the extension by the Economic Community of West African States of its moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms and light weapons in West

Africa. However, we believe that national and regional efforts to curb the menace of those weapons must be buttressed by effective international measures, in particular at the source of those deadly weapons. Sierra Leone therefore welcomes the Franco-Swiss initiative concerning marking and tracing mechanisms to check the illicit flow of those weapons. If States fail to see the necessity of taking action regarding the sale of small arms and light weapons to non-State entities — a matter of serious concern to my delegation and one on which we have been pressing for action — the least that they could do is join others in the current march towards international legally binding instruments on marking and tracing.

It is not enough to establish projects and programmes for the destruction of small arms and light weapons — as we have done in Sierra Leone — only after they have caused all that fatal damage to innocent lives. We must ensure that those weapons do not, in the first place, reach those who are prepared to acquire them illegally and to use them indiscriminately and illegally to kill our people.

Mr. Castellón Duarte (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to speak in support of draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.36, introduced by Ambassador Lint of Belgium, on the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. It is essentially the same as resolutions adopted by the General Assembly in previous years, while appropriately updated.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, known as the Ottawa Convention, was the result of enormous efforts by the international community. Humanitarian concerns, above all, were the principle motive for the creation of the Convention. Its subject is not mines in themselves, but human beings: mines as they relate to human beings and not the reverse. The humanitarian aspect of the Convention envisages assistance to victims and support for their rehabilitation and reintegration and for the economic development of communities and areas affected. To that end, it is crucial to have the full commitment of all States parties to the Convention and of States that have not yet acceded to the Convention in order to completely eradicate anti-personnel mines and to deal with their devastating humanitarian impact. The theme chosen for the Fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, held in Geneva from 16 to 20 September, was "Every minute counts". With that theme, the meeting attempted to raise awareness of the fact that someone is killed or maimed by an anti-personnel mine every 20 minutes.

In draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.36, States that have not signed the Ottawa Convention are encouraged to accede to it without delay, and all States that have signed but not ratified the Convention are urged to ratify it without delay. States parties are requested to provide complete and timely information in accordance with the provisions of article 7 of the Convention, in order to promote transparency and compliance with the Convention. By this draft resolution, the General Assembly would also renew its appeal to all States and other relevant parties to work together to promote, support and advance the care, rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of mine victims, mine risk education programmes and the removal of anti-personnel mines placed throughout the world and the assurance of their destruction. The draft resolution also notes that the next Meeting of States Parties will be held in Bangkok from 15 to 19 November 2003.

My delegation believes that the process initiated by the Ottawa Convention cannot achieve the complete eradication of all anti-personnel mines throughout the world as long as there are Governments that refuse to accede to the Convention or to comply with its provisions. The media and non-governmental organizations specialized in this area report that anti-personnel mines continue to be used in various conflicts. For the well-being of this and future generations, we hope that these practices will not continue. This is a humanitarian cause. My delegation therefore requests all delegations and Governments to join this campaign in favour of life, to ratify the Convention and to join in sponsoring the draft resolution before us, which we hope will be adopted with the greatest possible number of votes.

The Acting Chairman: I give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. Sattar (Secretary of the Committee): I would like to inform the Committee that the following Member States have become sponsors of the following draft resolutions: draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.4, Honduras; draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.20, Barbados and Liberia; draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.30, Bangladesh; draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.34, Honduras;

draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.35, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Papua New Guinea; draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.36, Fiji; draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.38, Bangladesh and Honduras; draft resolutions A/C.1/57/L.42 and A/C.1/57/L.44, Bangladesh and Honduras; and draft resolutions A/C.1/57/L.50 and A/C.1/57/L.51, Malaysia.

Organization of work

The Acting Chairman: As stated yesterday, in accordance with the Committee's programme of work and timetable, the third phase of the Committee's work, the action on all draft resolutions and decisions submitted under agenda items 57, 58 and 60 to 73, will begin next week. In that connection, I would like to announce that a paper grouping together the draft resolutions in several clusters, contained in document A/C.1/57/CRP.3, has been made available.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.